

**TESTIMONY OF EILEEN M. HEALY**  
**Governor's Proposed FY 23 Budget Adjustments**  
**H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM**  
**ENDING JUNE 30, 2023.**

My name is Eileen Healy. I live in Woodbury. I am the Executive Director of Independence Northwest, one of CT's five independent living centers. We serve the northwestern corner of CT. I thank you for your past support of the Independent Living Centers (ILCs) and ask that you **increase funding for the ILCs by \$1M dollars annually.**

In 2004, the Governor-appointed State Independent Living Council set a base level of funding for each ILC at \$550K per year, and in 2022, they are still recommending \$550K per ILC. In the past 17 years, the state has **never** achieved this recommended level of funding, and in fact, state funding for ILCs has been reduced. In comparison, New York ILCs are state funded at \$335K each and in Massachusetts, \$645K each; CT ILCs, are funded at a paltry \$93K<sup>1</sup> each. Thanks to the legislature, we did receive an increase, but we are still almost \$67K less than the line item in 2015. Please keep in mind, that in the last 35 years of ILC operations, the cost of living increased by 200%, resulting in reductions on top of deficits, which forced the ILCs to cut back on the towns and people we serve, created waiting lists, laid-off staff and reduced salaries.

Here's what's unique about independent living centers: we are non-residential, despite our name, and we serve people with ALL types of disabilities and of ALL ages. Our **only** eligibility criteria is having a disability. It doesn't matter if someone wants help with housing, employment, benefits, transportation, health care, education, assistive technology, recreation, family matters, or any other barrier they are facing. We assist consumers to navigate the myriad of services, programs and benefits that exist as "silos" in CT. We employ qualified people with disabilities who share our experiences and our path to independence, offering practical guidance because **we have lived it.** Increasing state Independent Living dollars ensures that our services remain free and that the ILCs can return to serving the entire state, reducing yet another barrier to achieving independent living. The ILCs are the only place where people with disabilities go when they can't afford, or are found ineligible, for other programs or their needs aren't addressed holistically.

Independence Northwest supports the Governor's proposed funding for increasing vocational services, technical education, mental health, and domestic violence services<sup>2</sup>; all are opportunities to improve independent living for people with disabilities. With increased funding for the ILCs, we can be valuable resources and partners in those initiatives.

Connecticut's fiscal health is the strongest it has been in a generation. Increasing funding by \$1M for the ILCs would begin to restore vital IL services to people with disabilities in every town and city in Connecticut.

**I urge you to increase the funding for the ILCs by \$1M dollars, or more.**

*Eileen M. Healy*

Woodbury, CT

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<sup>1</sup>In addition, the ILCs each receive state funding of \$60K that is dedicated **exclusively** to deaf services.

<sup>2</sup> People with disabilities experience domestic violence at a far greater rate than the general population.